



# Fraud Newsletter

October 2008

*Sheriff Steve Mansfield*

## Fraud and ID Theft Information – To Better Protect the Residents of Lewis County

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*"If it's too good to be true  
it normally is"*

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### PROTECT YOUR ID

- 1** Always know who you are providing personal information to
- 2** If you use passwords to access accounts make sure to change them often
- 3** Never provide personal information in response to any unsolicited offer
- 4** Know the company you are dealing with when making online purchases

Fraud is simply a theft by trick. It can take the form of chain letters claiming huge amounts of cash to those who send money in or people claiming they will provide a service and never do.

Identity theft and identity fraud are terms used to refer to all types of crimes in which someone wrongfully obtains and uses another person's personal data in a way that involves fraud or deception for economic gain. This newsletter is intended to keep the public informed of the most recent fraud schemes happening in our county. It will also provide resources to help you take precautions to protect yourself from these vicious crimes.

## Current Scams and Frauds Hitting Lewis County

### Sweepstakes and Lottery Prize Scams

Just when we thought that this one had started to slow down it started right back up. Now it's on our Top Frauds list again. The most recent attack comes from a company claiming to be the "Publisher's Clearing House". The letterhead looks just like the logo we see on TV. The notification doesn't come with balloons or cameras but does come with a check from a different company. The letters are all postmarked from Canada and include instructions to call prior to cashing the check (the area codes are always in Canada). If you do call you are instructed to cash the check and wire transfer a portion of the money to the company to release your remaining winnings. Because so many people do participate in the Publisher's Clearing House sweepstakes it opens the door to frauds and scams. The check is a forgery and if you cash it, you will be out of the money. It is all a scam. – **REMEMBER**– think before you act – why would a US Company be sending you a letter from Canada.

### Frauds Directed at Senior Citizens

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*"Internet fraud is the fastest growing crime in the US"*

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**Senior citizens represent 15 percent of the U.S. population, but are 35 percent of all fraud victims.**

**Several factors make seniors more vulnerable to fraud:**

- **A desire to be helpful or charitable opens the door to those who wish to fraudulently tug at the heart strings of our senior adults.**
- **A generation with more trust of others provides opportunity to abuse that trust.**
- **Loneliness makes a senior more willing to talk with a friendly stranger.**
- **Seniors tend to be home when the con-artists wish to stalk their prey.**
- **Some seniors have lost a degree of physical or mental acuity making them even more vulnerable.**
- **They often do not report the crime because of the fear they may lose some of their independence.**

**A senior may have developed a dependency on a dishonest caregiver and see no way out of a bad situation. Statistics are showing a significant increase in the exploitation of seniors by caregivers.**

**We know this group is clearly at risk and we all must take positive steps to protect them.**

- **Don't be afraid to ask questions and offer assistance to your friends and family who are part of this target group.**
- **Offer assistance and do not be critical of the actions they have taken. This allows them to maintain the independence they fear may be lost.**
- **If you believe they have been the victim of a fraud – REPORT IT.**

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*"Vigilance is the only real protection against Internet fraud"*

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The internet is a powerful tool used by both legitimate businesses and scam artists alike. Always take steps to protect yourself and your personal information as you would protect your home or car.

#### Other Resources

Phone Busters (Canadian Link) - <http://www.phonebusters.com/>

The Federal Citizen Information Center -  
<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission - <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

The FBI Fraud Information page -  
<http://www.fbi.gov/maicases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm>

The Internet Crime Complaint Center - <http://www.ic3.gov/>

#### Lewis County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

To make a positive difference for members of our community by seeking and finding ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety and quality service.



**Sheriff Steve Mansfield**

*Committed to make a difference.*